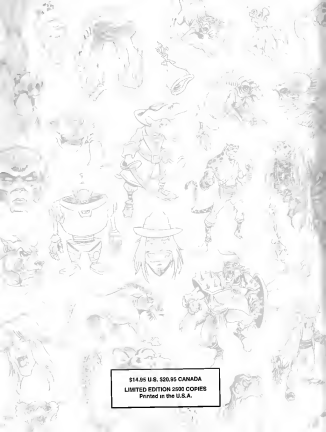


# MINDSIGHT



The FRANK CIROCCO  
SKETCHBOOK



\$14.95 U.S. \$20.95 CANADA  
LIMITED EDITION 2500 COPIES  
Printed in the U.S.A.

The FRANK CIROCCO SKETCHBOOK

# MINDSIGHT



2500

Frank Cirro

**TANTRUM**  
ENTERTAINMENT

My eternal thanks to everyone who contributed to the creation of this publication.  
I am so fortunate that they are a part of my life in ways far beyond this.

Gary Wernick  
Brent Andersen  
Lain Dowling  
Jack Swan  
Mick Gray  
Alex Sherburne  
Ryan Sack  
Helen Felcher

Production and Design Artists:  
Andrea Lam  
Tim Ho

Front cover color:  
Jeremy Cox

Inking:  
page 22, 23, 50: Mick Gray  
page 14, 52: Terry Austin  
page 61: Hilary Barta  
page 63: Isaac Mangold

All characters and artwork reproduced here are TM and ©2003 by their respective owners and are shown for historic and journalistic purposes only. Grateful acknowledgement is made to the original publishers, advertisers, manufacturers and clients who include:

Marvel Comics  
Dreamworks Interactive  
DC Comics  
Electronic Arts  
The Learning Company  
LucasArts Ltd.  
Pacific Data Images  
Terry Smith Creative  
Sun Microsystems  
Rocket Science Games  
Southpeak Interactive  
Spectrum Holobyte  
Orbital Studios  
P.E. Magic

All rights reserved.  
No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the expressed written permission of the publisher. Every attempt has been made to give copyright credit where it is due. Please inform the publisher of any omissions so that corrections can be made in future editions.

©2003 Lantern Entertainment  
www.lanternent.com  
Published in association with  
Lightsource Studios LLC  
3842 Civic Ave. Dr.  
San Jose, CA 95124  
www.lightsourcestudios.com

# INTRODUCTION



**I** entered the world of Frank Casco over thirty years ago. It was a time when comic books were all the world there was for certain pre-teen boys yearning to express themselves and their innermost desires.

Prior to our first meeting, I had been writing and drawing my own amateur comics while Frank had been industriously collecting and selling the real thing. On my second visit, I showed Frank a sizeable batch of my homemade comics. At the time, the only art he had shown me was a few over-sized posters he'd drawn of his favorite comic book heroes. Upon seeing these, I was awestruck and secretly impressed and more than a little envious of his talent. Upon my third visit, and I hadn't been away that long, he showed me several issues of a new comic he'd created during my absence. Frank was not only a talented artist, he was a gifted storyteller and prolific as hell.

Since those days, the world of Frank Ciocco has been filled with the stuff of myth and magic, populated by graceful, dynamic figures framed in lush, mysterious settings. Fairy tale icons such as enchanted gnomes, winged dragons, and classical musketeers reside here. Young children and fabled creatures frolic merrily together in verdant fields. Extraterrestrial beings of every size, shape and otherworldly distinction defend the universe against injustice. Perfect lovers lie entwined in romantic interludes amongst flower-bejeweled gardens.



There is an inescapable whimsy in all of Frank's work. Even his "scary" monsters are not so much scary as they are pleasantly frightening. Frightening in the cute way a four-year-old makes himself bigger and more impressive in facing the imposing, nearly overwhelming world just beyond his doorstep. Frank's preliminary sketches and color proofs reflect this quality particularly well. The line work flows and turns effortlessly through every form. The brush strokes are bold and sure and retain a natural 'bounce' which enhances and magnifies the whimsical nuance of his subjects.



All of Frank's art reflects this fanciful quality, this desire to give and receive love, to show anyone who will but look what a delightful world there could be if we would all only believe in it as strongly as Frank does. We are fortunate that someone like Frank can illustrate this desire so well, presenting to us a world where it not only exists, but also invites us to be a part of it. Welcome to the fantastic and delightful world of Frank Ciocco.

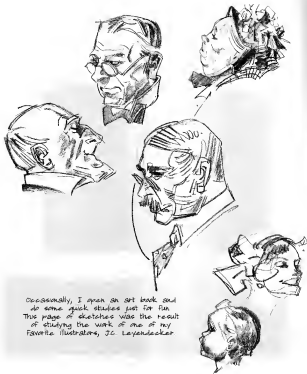
*Brent Eric Anderson  
May 2003*



As a commercial illustrator, conceptual art is what I do most these days. Character design comprises the bulk of that work, which is the reason most of the drawings included in this book are character related.

What makes a character intriguing? Believable characters need to "have a conscience" and appear "alive". When attempting to create an engaging character, I try to communicate their personality in simple, shorthand methods.





Occasionally, I open an art book and  
do some quick studies just for fun.  
This page of sketches was the result  
of studying the work of one of my  
Favorite Illustrators, J.C. Leyendecker.



Simplicity of design can be very deceiving in that it's never as easy as it looks. I recall spending a great deal of time on each of these "simple" tarot deck illustrations. These designs were released as a series of limited-edition portfolios.



Often, attitude is the most important trait to of a conceptual sketch. If I manage to nail the right attitude, most other details will follow. Facial expression and body gesture are the elements I rely on most to convey attitude.



# C H A R A C T E R

## D E S I G N

Art directors will usually have answers to preliminary questions: Is it human, animal or alien? Hero or villain? Male or female?



But, will the character have a cartoonish look with the ability to squash and stretch? Will its features be somewhat realistically rendered? Will it ultimately be brought to life as a 2D or 3D character?

When schedule and budget allow, it's a lot of fun to explore a number of different visual approaches. That process of exploration is what most of the sketches in this book are all about.

It's best to understand what a character is supposed to represent before blindly laying pencil to paper. When starting, I ask many questions related to motivation, personality traits, physical attributes, proportions, target audience or the environment a character inhabits.



For visual inspiration, I quite often gather reference from a variety of sources. At this stage of the process, I'm primarily searching for ideas to kick-start my quest for a character's general look, style, or proportion.



These sketches illustrate how accents like clothing and hairstyle can provide a distinctive look to a character's appearance.



It's always a privilege to have the opportunity to do my version of an established character.

It's always fun to decide which part of the hero's myth to accentuate.



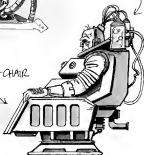
These sketches of Batman, Spider-Man, and Carmen Sandiego were all done for commercial media projects, none of which were presented in a traditional comic strip format.





breathing liquids

HOVER-CHAIR



CABLES FROM HOOD  
CONNECT TO BACK  
OF SUIT

KASHMIR

BALANCED, SCARFY HEAD  
(complete with blinking  
diode-eyes)

CONTROL-DIALS  
AT FINGERTIPS



TANK TREADS







These character designs were done  
for a computer game called Velocity.  
The concept involved a  
futuristic "Mission Impossible"  
like motif, which featured  
a female secret agent in  
the title role.



Velocity was required to infiltrate  
the underground installation of an evil  
megalomaniac named Koshut who  
was confined to an armored  
wheelchair. I had lots of fun on this  
one, but unfortunately, the project  
was never completed.



Trolls, aliens, and humans comprised the team rosters for Electronic Arts' *Violent League Football*. This collection of trading cards was a freebie given away in *GamePro Magazine*.



The set of 24 full-color cards had an aggressive 5-day deadline, necessitating a flexible style that accommodated speed. Sometimes tight deadlines can produce some favorable results.

"Design some ridiculous  
super heroes" It sounds  
redundant, doesn't it?  
These costumed offerings  
were created for a  
city overpopulated by  
thronges of mixed villains  
and heroes

The Un-gray  
VACILLATOR



MENTAL  
MIDWEST



The Diabolical  
SPINIS MASTER



BOMBHELL

SUNNY BOY



CAPTAIN  
VELCRO

The 'good guys' were  
enriched as a part of  
a team, the 'do-gooders  
League', a spoof on  
every crime-fighting  
team ever created



expression studies  
like these are an  
exercise I use to  
"get into character"  
when developing a  
new personality.  
These are attempts  
to add that layer  
of "consciousness"  
into the drawings.







A typical goal in character design is to have the audience identify with relatable characteristics.

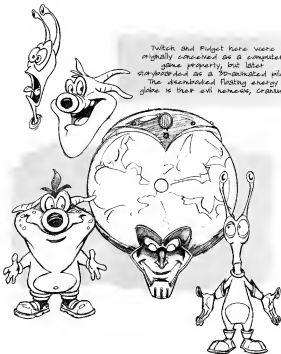
This teen was described to me as independent, edgy, smart, and confident.



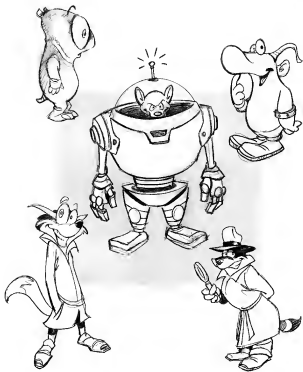


These model sheets are revised  
Chief Anderson's character designs done  
for the Learning Company, a children's  
educational software company.

















In the late seventies,  
I established a tradition  
of illustrating original  
greeting cards for  
family members.



cute, furry artists such as  
bunnies, mice and cats are  
the typical subject matter  
of these pieces, usually  
engaged in some occasion-  
specific activity.





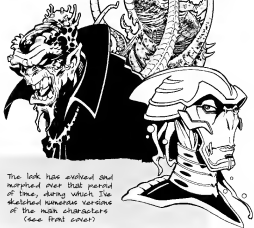


A Few of the illustrations were printed as full-color greeting cards in the early eighties. Between Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries, there are now enough designs to fill a book of their own!





These are a few sketches from a project entitled Mythica. It is a story of mine that's been percolating for years.



The look has evolved and morphed over that period of time, during which I've sketched numerous versions of the main characters (see front cover).

Mythos is a surreal world,  
which will allow space for  
visually dramatic and unusually  
stylized environments and  
characters. I've always believed  
the best fantasy is based on  
reality, therefore the surroundings  
will be comprised of familiar  
shapes and textures incorporated  
into a very unfamiliar realm.



THE DARK TOWER

THE DARK TOWER



Why are 'bad guys'  
so much fun to draw?  
I think it's because  
their shapes tend to be  
far more extreme and  
flamboyant expressions  
are dramatically  
exaggerated and far  
more outrageous than  
other, more virtuous  
characters.

Dramatic lighting is  
another device that  
can help make a  
villain look even more  
ominous. The more  
contrast used when  
lighting a figure  
creates shadows  
from which he can  
effectively emerge  
or retreat.



# villains

Angular, rather than  
soft shapes, generally  
create a more threatening  
presence. Accessories

like wrinkles, warts,  
claws, teeth, veins or  
horns all help to add a  
sense of evil in a villain.















When drawing fantastic characters, I enjoy adding a touch of the surreal to convey a more commanding presence. Sometimes the moment of pause that precedes a character springing into action can be the most dramatic.



This is an inspirational sketch from a property that's currently under development. It involves some intriguing characters including a fallen angel with an attitude, a water-wolf-like vampire, and more all set in WWII Italy



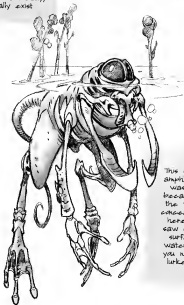


These creatures were conceived for a Star Trek computer game. The objective here was to populate an alien zoo. I recall spending two blissful weeks of uninterrupted exploration on this enjoyable assignment.



I feel it's important for any Fantasy creature's anatomy to be very convincing and believable. It needs to look like it can move realistically, and actually exist.

## Creatures



This bottom-heavy amphibious critter was fun to do because of what the water could conceal. My thinking here: what you saw breaking the surface of the water would give you no idea what lurked beneath.









WÜLFING



SPLEEF



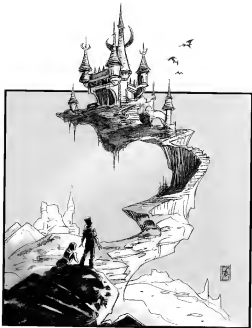
When designing  
fantasy creatures,  
I'll quite often go  
through the exercise  
of jotting down notes  
that explain traits  
and even name the  
species. All of this  
information will assist  
in depicting a more  
believable organism.

SHORE WOLCH



WOLGHOUKAN



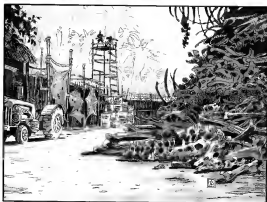


An aesthetically pleasing sense of design is not an easy concept to explain, but it's about balance more than anything else. I feel most of a good design sense has to come naturally before you can refine it with study. It is the solid foundation upon which every other aspect of graphic art is built. Balance and rhythm of line are the keys. The directional lines of a composition need to flow from one form to another. In addition, there needs to be a balance between light and dark, as well as foreground and background elements.

# ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

These examples illustrate the relatively simple manner in which I divide the space on a page, which is one of the most gratifying components of the creative process for me. I know I've achieved a successful composition when the shapes seem to flow naturally and gracefully across the page.

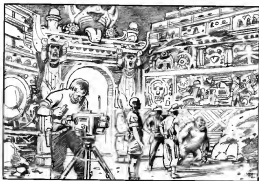




Production art for the Cadillac & Dinosaurs project  
done at Rocket Science Games in 1995.



*The sunken city of Atlantis provided one of the many backdrops of the '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea' computer game for Southpeak Interactive.*



*Congo production set done at Rocket Science Games*






Another sketch from the Mythosaa Files. The story describes a lofty dwelling for immortals called Skyrwatch. This is one of many designs that have been explored



A finished page from the 1986 Allen Legion graphic novel.

# C O M I C S & S T O R Y B O A R D S



When I accepted the Alien Legion assignment for Marvel, I felt I knew what my strengths and limitations were. My confidence rested on my design sense far more than my draftsmanship abilities.

I was aware that the first thing a reader was more likely to notice was the layout of a page rather than the details of each panel so I attempted to combine my graphic design sense with solid storytelling as much as possible. The Legion has proven to be an enduring property; currently, an animated TV series is in production.



The Big Mean Weenie was originally a 3-page comic story done for a humor anthology book I created entitled *Suburban High Life*. The Weenie's origin was later recounted in an updated, Flash-animated online cartoon called "Tubesteak Terror".

selected storyboards from a sequence for the animated movie, *ANZE*. In this scene, the evil General Mandala rallies his troops for battle. I was surprised to find that although I reduced many in-between frames to accommodate this sample page, the basic storytelling aspect of the sequence still works.





Selected panels from a "Real Gravity" comic strip done for Actium back in the mid-eighties

This is an unpublished version  
of a proposed samurai cat  
crossover samurai cat was a  
three-issue mini series for  
Marvel based on the stories  
by Mark S. Rogers





A preliminary page layout from *Defenders of Dynatron City* done for Marvel Comics





*A recent concept utilizing digital inking done with comics, trading cards and computer games in mind.*

## Frank Circus

As an independent contractor for more than twenty-five years, Frank has worked extensively in the entertainment software, comics, and advertising art markets. His originals, limited-edition portfolios, and art prints have been present on the fantasy collector's art market and in a number of one-man gallery shows since the late seventies.

Frank's professional career began at Continuity Associates in New York where he worked with Neal Adams and Dick Giordano on advertising illustration and comics. In 1977, he founded Horizon Zero Graphics with partner Gary Winick which still operates today, now known as Lightsource Studios.

At Marvel Comics in the eighties, Frank designed and/or illustrated a number of titles, including *The Alien Legion*, *Samaritan*, *Cat*, and *Luccardi's Defenders of Dynatron City*. Frank was also a featured cover artist at Marvel on such titles as *The Hulk*, *Dr. Strange*, *Amazing High Adventure*, and *The Defenders*. Other comic projects at the time included a *Buck Rogers* mini-series for TSR.



## Centipede



In the mid nineties, Frank worked as an art director and production designer for *Rockin' Science Games*. As a production designer, he helped conceive and develop the *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* project for Sega and assisted in production and character design for a variety of R&G projects.

Continuing his work as a creative director at Lightsource Studios, Frank manages one of the premier art, design and production houses in the San Francisco Bay Area. Go to [www.lightsourcestudios.com](http://www.lightsourcestudios.com) for more information.

---

Additional copies of this book may be ordered directly from **Tantum Entertainment** for \$14.95 plus \$2.95 postage (media rate) and handling per copy. Send your name, address and a check or money order to **Tantum Entertainment**, 2042 Casa Rita Dr. San Jose CA, 95124.

For dealer inquiries and a list of other merchandise go to [www.tantum.com](http://www.tantum.com)



